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WEST BANK/GAZA

FACT SHEET

EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Model Schools Network (MSN) Program

PROJECT PROFILE

JANUARY 2011



A visit by a group of al-Awa'el school students to the Science and Math Museums at Al Quds University, sponsored by the Model Schools Network Program.

CHALLENGES

- Outdated teaching methodologies used for English, Science and Mathematics.
- Lack of existing professional networks among MoEHE schools.
- Limited resources of many Palestinian families to pay school fees and other educational expenses.
- Lack of adequate PA funding for consistent continuing education opportunities for teachers.

Project Overview

Model Schools Network (MSN) is an institutional capacity building initiative focused on improving the quality of basic education (grades 1-9) in Palestine. MSN focuses on the professional development of teachers and administrators at the model schools, particularly in the areas of English, math, and science. The program also emphasizes the development of critical thinking skills to better prepare the next generation for the global economy and for their role as active participants in a vibrant democracy.

Goals

- Introduce educational concepts, teaching approaches, learning techniques and classroom resources that will measurably improve student-learning outcomes.
- Pilot and develop an expandable network of private and public schools that embrace a new approach to teaching and learning for Palestinian children.
- Evaluate and document results for future replication.

Activities

At its core, the MSN program focuses on the professional development of teachers and administrators within the model school network, particularly in the areas of English, math, and science. The professional development for teachers consists of monthly face-to-face training throughout the academic year, learning circles, mentoring, individual observations and feedback, a virtual learning environment, and online support for teachers. Teachers who successfully complete the professional development training are eligible to receive a Professional Certificate in teaching in their respective disciplines and are also eligible to receive nine graduate credits from Al Quds University and An Najah National University.

The initial phase of MSN supported 17 private schools in the West Bank. Forty public schools in the West Bank were added a year later. In Gaza, MSN supports two kinds of educational opportunities: local scholarships for private school students and educational programming for hundreds of teachers, students, and school counselors.

Current gaps in teacher performance and student learning outcomes will be addressed by developing a unique School Improvement Plan (SIP) for each network school. The SIP process identifies the critical gaps at each particular school by involving school principals, teachers and parents in the educational assessment.

MSN also supports a number of professional networking opportunities for teachers, including attendance at relevant conferences and local peer-to-peer exchanges. MSN schools actively support robust parent-teacher associations, after-school youth enrichment programs, and summer camps focused on English, math and science.



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Five kilometer bike race in Jericho sponsored by USAID for children participating in the Model Schools Network Program.

MSN activities also encourage professional networking among schools and strengthen links between schools and their communities in order to foster engaged “communities of learning” that best support children’s learning outcomes.

MSN works in partnership with Al Quds and Birzeit Universities, “Al Muntada Young Scientists’ Club,” and various U.S. educational institutions to design experiential learning approaches, which are unique to the Palestinian educational methods.

To ensure the MSN teaching model is making a difference, assessments are conducted for English, math, science, and critical thinking classes. In addition, MSN is conducting a study of the 40 public schools that will assess basic attitudes, teaching practices, and overall school effectiveness.

Successes

- Expanded the MSN best practices to a total of 57 schools in the West Bank and 12 private schools in Gaza.
- Established an invaluable, cooperative relationship with critical partners throughout the Ministry of Education and Higher Education.
- Trained 140 teachers and 17 school principals and administrative staff members on a wide range of topics including contemporary pedagogy, strategies for promoting critical thinking, education administration, leadership skills and more.
- Developed and implemented a virtual learning environment, a software system designed to support teaching and learning in an educational setting, allowing teachers and students to interact, collaborate and create shared on-line content.
- Introduced critical thinking and problem solving concepts through professional development curriculum programs for teachers. The modules introduced a revolutionary approach to teaching and learning practices in Palestine.
- 322 public school teachers started the professional certificate program for English, math, and science subject areas.
- Developed a policy paper addressing ten key recommendations for the Ministry’s Teacher Education Strategy and furthering national teacher training.
- Completed refurbishments and renovation of facilities of all 17 private schools.

Project Detail

Implementing Partner: AMIDEAST; Life of Project: 09/30/2007- 09/30/2012; Total Estimated Cost: \$22,100,000.

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